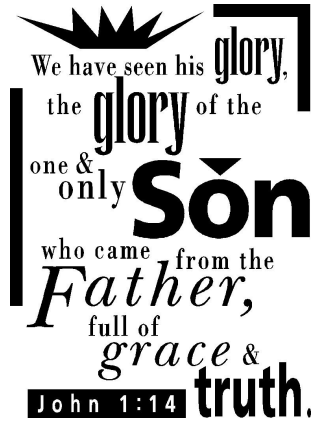


Christmas Day

Text: John 1:1-14 (NIV)

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴In him was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. ⁶There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. ⁸He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. ⁹The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹²Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—¹³children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. ¹⁴The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.



Theme: *We Can only Understand God through the Gift of His Son*

There is nothing as hard to understand in this world as God. To be honest, none of our childhood questions have ever been asked, “Where did God come from?” “Where is heaven?” “Couldn’t God have stopped the devil?” “Why are some saved and not others?” There are so many questions that we would like to ask God. With St. Paul in Romans 11 we are left bewildered, “*Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgements, and His paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counselor?*” The Bible often shows that we cannot understand God, but He has revealed Himself in the gift of His Son Jesus Christ.

I. Without God’s Word, we are hopeless when we try to understand God.

When we ask those questions, we get everything mixed up when we try to figure out the answer with our minds. We know that there is one God, but three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Try to explain that. You might understand the highest levels of math, the meaning to every poem ever written, and even what Bit Coins are, but you still won’t be able to understand God. We will be lost explaining how the eternal Father can beget an eternal Son or how the Holy Spirit can proceed from the Father and the Son. This is so confusing that we still use words like “beget” and “proceed” that most people don’t even understand today. Beget means to have offspring, and the Spirit goes out from the Father and the Son. A recent article of the *Lutheran Witness* says of this, “That is hard to imagine, impossible really.” (*LW*, June, 2011)

John begins his Gospel very much this way. Verse 1 says, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning*” I studied theology for 8 years, and I have been a pastor for 25 years, and to be honest this verse is still a mystery. It is beyond our comprehension.

II. But then John gives us an understanding of God by how He acts through His Son.

He begins with creation. In verses 3-4 John writes, *“Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of men.”* There are some things that we can understand. The world was **created** through the only begotten Son of God. Genesis 1 has one of my favorite Hebrew phrases. It says that the world was formless and empty. The Hebrew is “tohu wabohu.” Jeremiah uses the same words to describe how the land of Israel would be after the Babylonians would finish conquering it. It means “a big mess.” Whatever was here in the beginning was straightened out by the Son of God. He brought order into the world. He began by creating light, and ended by creating life. Although evil has come into the world, there is still a lot of goodness that remains. We see it in so many ways this Christmas season. Although I wasn’t fond on snow on Sunday morning, it was beautiful as I drove to work on Monday morning. We see it in the generosity that we show to others this time of year. We are blessed by the family and the friends that God has given to us. There are still so many good things in this world. They point us to the power and the goodness of the Creator. Creation doesn’t tell us who the Creator is, but it is a powerful witness, that this world had a magnificent Creator.

Here John tells us that Jesus was the agent of creation. All things were made through Him. The **light** in the world and the **life**, that we have, are gifts from Him. In John’s Gospel light and life are often linked with Jesus. For instance, in John 8:12 Jesus says, *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”* In John 11:25 He says, *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believe in Me will live, even though He dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.”* In this fallen world, Jesus is the One who is the Light to navigate us through all the temptations, the troubles, the weaknesses, the sins, and even death itself. The One who created light is our Light to guide us through this dark world. But most importantly He gives us life. He promises life to the full now. (Jn 10), but especially eternal life with Him with both body and soul at the resurrection of the dead. He speaks of that in the most famous verse of the Bible, *“For God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life.”* That is the key. The Father sent His Son, so that we could have the gift of eternal life through Him. That is also where the work of the Holy Spirit comes in. Jesus said about the Spirit in John 15:26, *“He will testify about Me.”* The Father sent His Son. The Holy Spirit testifies through the Gospel, that Jesus is our light in this dark world, and that in Him, we have the gift of eternal life. It is Jesus who brought light in life into this world at creation, and He who will guide us on the path to everlasting life.

God also acted through Jesus in our redemption. John writes in verse 14, *“The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”* This is the miracle of all times. The eternal Son of God took our flesh on Himself, and made His dwelling among us. In the Old Testament the place where God promised to dwell among His people was the temple. Now He has come to dwell in this world in the flesh of the Man Jesus Christ. Immanuel, God with Us, was in the womb of the Virgin Mary. He was lying in the manger in Bethlehem. He walked the streets of Israel. He died on the cross, and rose on Easter morning.

Jesus is full of **grace and truth**. These are salvation words. God’s grace is His undeserved love for us. We are save by **grace**. This world fell into sin. Along with the goodness, there is a lot of evil,

even in our own hearts. In Bible class we have been looking at Matthew 6 in which Jesus shows clearly that none of us are perfect. Have we ever spoken hurtful words, had impure thoughts, broken our promises or been filled with hatred toward those who have wronged us? We have all failed. We have all hurt other people with our thoughts, our words, and our deeds. But Christ has come with grace. He came to bear our sins. He did exactly that on Calvary's cross. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. We deserve hell, but Jesus bore it in our place. His gift to us is the forgiveness of all of our sins.

He is also full of *truth*. When the Bible speaks of God's truthfulness, it means His faithfulness. We can always count on Him. Paul speaks of this in Romans 8, where he writes, "*What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all— how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things? ... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? ... [Nothing] will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" If God loved you so much to give you the gift of His Son, if Jesus loved you so much that He suffered and died on the cross for you, and if the Holy Spirit has called you to follow Jesus, you can be 100% sure that God will always be there for you. His love is always sure. He will never let you down.

Without Jesus, it is impossible to understand God or believe in Him. It is only when you understand God through the cross of Christ, that you come to know Him and His love for you. The Father sent His Son, the Son gave His life for us, and the Holy Spirit enlightens our hearts to trust that Jesus died and rose for me.

Don't try to ponder God without the Scriptures. If you do, you will be led into all kinds of strange ideas. Look to Christ and there you will see the One who brought life and light into the world in the beginning and yet to us today, and you will also see the One who redeemed us from our sins by His grace and promises that He will remain eternally faithful to all who trust in Him.

May God's Spirit give us those eyes to see that this child who was laid in the manger is God in the flesh, our Savior.

Amen.

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